

Claims

1. A network-based portal comprising:
an access module allowing one or more users to access one or more of a plurality of applications; and
an invoicing module operable to maintain a record of usage that a user has made via the access module of at least one of the applications and to generate an invoice amount based at least in part upon the recorded usage.
2. A portal according to Claim 1, wherein the record of usage includes a record of a quantity of page impressions made during use of the at least one application by the user.
3. A portal according to Claim 1, wherein the record of usage includes a record of a quantity of SMS messages sent during use of the at least one application by the user.
4. A portal according to Claim 1, wherein the record of usage includes a record of a quantity of projects accessed during use of the at least one application by the user.
5. A portal according to Claim 1, wherein the record of usage includes a record of a volume of data stored during use of the at least one application by the user.
6. A portal according to Claim 1, wherein the record of usage includes a record of a length of time for which the user has accessed the at least one application.
7. A portal according to Claim 1, wherein the access module is operable to allow the one or more users to access respective ones of the plurality of applications simultaneously.
8. A portal according to Claim 1 wherein, if a user has accessed one of the plurality of applications and has been inactive for a predetermined period of time, the access module will terminate the access of that user to the application.
9. A portal according to Claim 8, wherein the predetermined period may be set individually for each user or group of users.
10. A portal according to Claim 1, further comprising a registration module to register new users of the portal, thereby creating an account for each user or for a group of users.

11. A portal according to Claim 10, wherein a user may not access any of the applications unless the user has obtained an account through the registration module.

12. A portal according to Claim 10, wherein the registration module allows a user to be registered as a group administrator, and allows further users to be registered as part of the group.

13. A portal according to Claim 12, wherein the access module allows a group administrator to determine which of the plurality of applications each member of the group may access.

14. A portal according to Claim 1, further comprising a payment module that is operable to allow each user or group of users to select one of a plurality of usage tariffs which will be used to calculate invoice amounts for the user.

15. A portal according to Claim 1, further comprising a payment module that is operable to allow each user or group of users to select one of a plurality of payment methods.

16. A portal according to Claim 15, wherein each user or group of users may select a first payment method to pay charges relating to initial costs and a second payment method to pay charges relating to recurring costs.

17. A computer-readable medium having encoded therein computer-readable instructions for causing user equipment programmed thereby to perform a method of invoicing users for use of applications, the method comprising:

- allowing one or more users to access one or more of a plurality of applications;

- maintaining a record of usage that a user has made of at least one of the applications; and

- generating an invoice amount based at least in part upon the recorded usage.

18. A computer-implemented method of invoicing users for use of applications, the method comprising the steps of:

- allowing one or more users to access one or more of a plurality of applications;

- maintaining a record of usage that a user has made of at least one of the applications; and

- generating an invoice amount based at least in part upon the recorded usage.

19. A method according to Claim 18, wherein the usage recorded includes a quantity of page impressions made during use of the at least one application by the user.

20. A method according to Claim 18, wherein the usage recorded includes a quantity of SMS messages sent during use of the at least one application by the user.

21. A method according to Claim 18, wherein the usage recorded includes a quantity of projects accessed during use of the at least one application by the user.

22. A method according to Claim 18, wherein the usage recorded includes a volume of data stored during use of the at least one application by the user.

23. A method according to Claim 18, wherein the usage recorded includes a length of time for which the user has accessed the at least one application.

24. A method according to Claim 18, further comprising the step of allowing each user or group of users to select one of a plurality of usage tariffs which will be used to calculate invoice amounts for the user.

25. A method according to Claim 18, further comprising the step of allowing each user or group of users to select one of a plurality of payment methods.

26. A method according to Claim 25, further comprising the step of allowing each user or group of users to select a first payment method to pay charges relating to initial costs and a second payment method to pay charges relating to recurring costs.

27. A method according to Claim 18, implemented on a network-based portal.

28. A computer-readable medium having encoded therein computer-readable instructions for causing user equipment programmed thereby to perform the method of Claim 18.